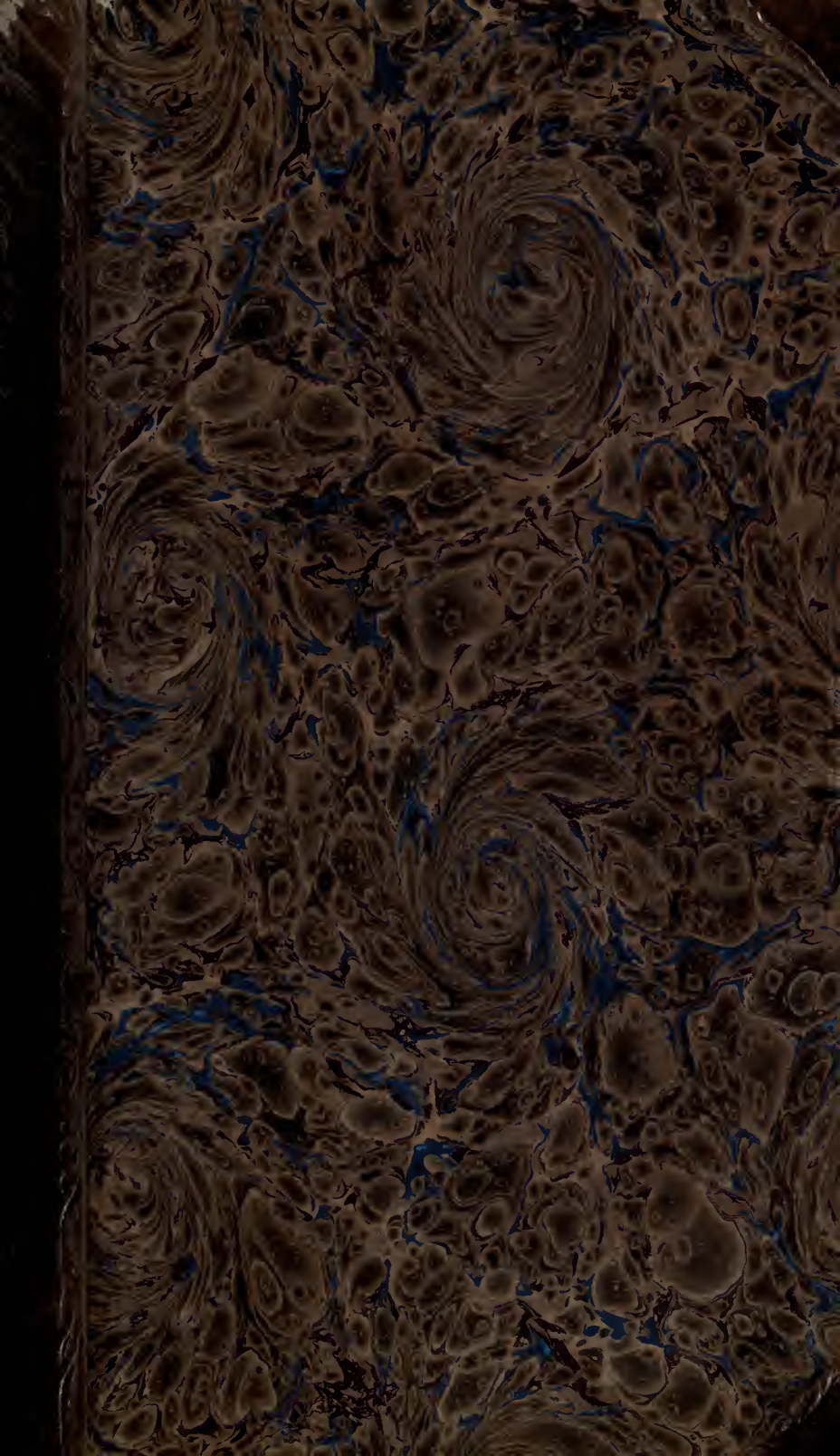




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HANDBOUND
AT THE

POPERY IN IRELAND A PERSECUTOR ;

OR,

THE THEOLOGY OF PETER DENS

ILLUSTRATED BY EXAMPLES.

BY THE REV. J. G. LORIMER, OF ST. DAVID'S PARISH.

THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION OF GLASGOW earnestly request the public attention to the following Letters. They are of the highest authority; and describe, not an old or obsolete state of things, but what is passing in Ireland at the present day. The Roman Catholic priesthood represent themselves as the great advocates of freedom, and many Protestants in this country imagine that Popery is much changed for the better. The accompanying facts will show what credit is due to such assertions and impressions. It is deserving of special notice, that the persons so cruelly persecuted were not clergymen or landed proprietors, or individuals connected with the military or police of the country, who, from particular circumstances, might be obnoxious to the peasantry—but were sincere, humble inquirers after divine truth, or faithful professors of the faith, or conscientiously engaged in making known its blessings to others: in short, that they suffered for doing what they were bound by the laws of heaven to do, and what is done by Protestants in this country every day, not only with impunity, but with honour. When one considers that the facts detailed are not solitary cases, but form mere specimens of what is daily taking place in the Roman Catholic districts of Ireland, who can doubt that Popery is still what it has ever been—the great enemy of civil and religious liberty; and that it is not so much the Protestant institutions of the country against which its persecuting power is directed, as our common Protestant religion?

"To His Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, &c.

"MY LORD,—I beg most respectfully to submit to your Excellency the following narrative of an outrage perpetrated in the town of Castlebar, in the county of Mayo, on Wednesday the 16th instant.—The steward of the Rev. Mr. Stoney, of Newport, was made the victim of the most brutal and cowardly assault. On that day he was standing on the fair-green of Castlebar, where many hundreds of people were collected; one of the gang came behind the unconscious victim, and felled him to the earth by a blow on the head: six men then commenced beating him on the bare head, while the vast crowd looked quietly on, and made a ring around. Each assassin separately levelled his stick at the head of their prostrate victim, and when he had taken his turn another came on; the first broke his stick in pieces on him; the assailants at the same time cried out, as their murderous blows descended—'Take that, you jumper—new light—Bible reader!—what will Mr. Stoney do for a preacher now?' A man who was along with the steward threw himself on him to save him. One fellow called out to strike 'the jumper;' another desired them not to strike him, for he was not a jumper; they then dragged the man off the body, and fell to their bloody work, one of the gang holding the man, lest he should render any assistance; when they thought they had finished the work of slaughter, they went deliberately out of the fair-green, leaving the bleeding victim weltering in his gore—the crowd offering no resistance. The most revolting part of this transaction remains to be told: when the work of slaughter, as it was supposed, was over, and the poor victim lying on the earth bleeding, apparently to death, the crowd, who stood aloof while the outrage was perpetrating, allowed the cattle to close in on him, and showed by their driving them that they wished them to trample on their mangled fellow-creature. Not one lent a helping hand to raise him, and he would have bled to death on the spot, only the man who had been held by the assassins while they were so cruelly using him, with difficulty raised, and at length succeeded in carrying him from amongst the cattle, less brutal than their drivers.

"That your Excellency may understand the events which preceded this revolting outrage, it is necessary to inform you that the week before it took place, Dr. McHale, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, spent some days in Newport and Achill, accompanied by thirteen priests. The bishop and priests held forth many harangues in the chapels of both places: they held up to the hatred and execration of the multitude many individuals by name, for daring to disobey the priests' mandates—for exercising liberty of conscience

and judging for themselves—for listening to the Scriptures read or preached. They represented Dr. M'Hale as 'the representative of God on earth, and the delegate of Heaven.' They told the excited people that the religion of Protestants had its origin in hell, and its end in hell; they were desired to hold no communications with them. The preaching of Protestants was described as hellish and devilish. They were neither to borrow nor lend, to buy nor sell from such.

"If your Excellency expresses any desire, I shall produce in Dublin respectable witnesses who were present when Dr. M'Hale and his priests made use in the chapels of the above described invectives and harangues against Protestants, and when, not long before, Mr. Hughes and Mr. Connolly, priests of Newport and Achill, ordered their followers to hunt Protestants with stones and dogs—to drown them in bog holes—burn them with boiling water, and kill them with pitchforks; they also distinctly intimated that those who disobeyed their mandates should suffer when they went to the fairs or markets of the neighbouring towns. I am prepared to prove all I state. And who, my Lord, was the victim singled out for the practical effects of this inculcation of *Dens' Theology*?—a person named William Mairs—an inoffensive, respectable man, endeavouring faithfully to discharge his duty to his heavenly and his earthly masters. This is the man whom the priest of Newport, Mr. Hughes, summoned before a bench of magistrates, and had him convicted for quoting a text of Scripture; on which occasion he admitted in the public court-house, that he had, in his chapel, desired the people to make use of pitchforks, stones, dogs, boiling water, and bog holes, against those who read the Scriptures to the poor. There is reason to believe that the late murderous attack on Mairs was planned in Newport, and persons who were strangers hired to execute the deed at the fair at Castlebar, the county town, whither he was followed by some of the most notorious characters. One of these was apprehended on suspicion, and from some information privately received, held over by a magistrate's order for further examination; the priest, Mr. Hughes, went forthwith to the police barrack, and desired the man should be instantly set at liberty—offered to pay money for a fine against the prisoner, for some infraction of the law—gave out many threats against the magistrates for presuming to take up, or keep in custody, one of his subjects, and evinced the greatest agitation and anxiety for his immediate liberation. Permit me now to call the attention of your Excellency to the fearful state of this country, and to the palpable causes of that state. Here is a man set upon, and almost murdered, in open day, in a crowded thoroughfare, in a county town—hundreds looking on passively, or rather evincing a brutal willingness to become partakers of the crime—making the tragical scene a subject of exultation and merriment through the country; the assassins informing us as to the real cause of the savage attack—his being a Protestant, and having incurred the displeasure of Dr. M'Hale and his thirteen priests, and of Mr. Hughes of Newport, for quoting a text of Scripture; I ask, my Lord, is it not as evident as the light of day that the true source and origin of this and all such outrage is to be found in the conduct and teaching of the Roman Catholic priesthood? and is it any wonder that the unhappy peasantry should be brutalized, maddened, and inflamed with rancorous animosity, hatred, and revenge, against their Protestant fellow-men, when those who call themselves the teachers of the religion of Christ, publicly proclaim a crusade of violence, outrage, and extermination, and inculcate, as a sacred duty, on those who are too ignorant to perceive their wickedness, the destruction of the servants of the Lord, who will not submit to the iron yoke of Romish superstition and sin?

"I did intend to call your Excellency's attention to some circumstances attending your late visit to the county of Mayo, and the remarkable variance between the language and addresses of Dr. M'Hale and his priests, when the representative of Majesty was impressed with an idea of their peace-loving virtues, and the language and addresses of the same functionaries when preaching in their chapels to the most ignorant and besotted peasantry in the world; but as this letter has already been extended to too great a length, that subject shall be reserved for another opportunity. In the meantime, permit me to subscribe myself your Excellency's most obedient humble servant,

WILLIAM B. STONEY,
Rector of Borrisshole."

"Newport Pratt, Sept. 21.

What reader is not struck with the debasing effect of Popery on the mind of the Irish people? The ferocity of the poor man's murderous assailants is shocking, but the cowardice of the onlookers is scarcely less base or abominable. Would the people of Protestant Scotland or England tamely stand by and see a fellow-creature, however unworthy his character, much more an innocent reader of the word of God, brutally beaten almost to death, without one word of remonstrance, without a single effort after rescue? Assuredly not.

"To the Lord Bishop of London.

"MY LORD,—It has been my lot to have spent many years, as a working curate of the Established Church, in that very district over which Dr. M'Hale presides as a Roman Catholic archbishop, and I have had, therefore, much opportunity for observing the instrumentality employed by him and his priests for the maintenance of the influence of the Church of Rome; and I have now presumed to call your Lordship's attention to one paragraph in his letter, which appears to me to express, though in a faint and shadowy manner, the real spirit and feeling which he is encouraging among the people, and which has, unhappily for us, too long impeded that power of expansion,—as a great and virtuous writer has expressed it,—which

is inherent to the freedom of thought and march of mind, inseparable from Protestant principles. The paragraph to which I allude is as follows:—

“ ‘Witness the recent abortive exertions of the Achill Missionary Society, that was to renovate the face of the island. In vain was it attempted to seduce the people from the faith of their fathers. A few strolling strangers, such as could be appropriately grouped with the fathers of the first reformation, were all they could enlist in their ranks. *The contemptuous scorn* with which the natives treated the pretensions of these ignorant fanatics, if adequately conveyed to your Lordship, would considerably sober your enthusiastic anticipation. *Some of the brotherhood have already fled from the bitter derision of the people!*—others are preparing to follow their example, finding or feigning a convenient apology in the unwholesomeness of the atmosphere. The Achill mission is already another tale of the numerous failures of fraud and fanaticism; and its buildings, now unfinished, are like the Tower of Babel, a monument of the folly and presumption of their architects.’ ”

“ This language, my Lord, demands your serious attention, and that of every Christian in England, as shadowing forth, inadvertently, though truly, the real cause which has impeded the progress of true religion in Ireland. It is unhappily too true that almost every effort which love of country and love of religion has yet made to enlighten and civilize the mass of the population, has been marred by the bitter and malignant spirit that has been evoked by the priests, so that the blight of failure has too often—though the Achill mission is still a happy exception—fallen upon the labours of those who would serve that afflicted land. In solemn and melancholy truth I say it, and before my God and my country I state it, that it is the Roman Catholic priesthood that have planted this ‘contemptuous scorn’ and this ‘bitter derision,’ which is here described as compelling men to fly from the sphere of their labours, in the minds of the people; and I here add the deep conviction of my soul—formed from an experience of ten years in the practical working of the ministry—that nothing whatever has prevented the conversion of a large body of the population except that dark spirit of persecution which is implied in the language of Dr. M’Hale, and which wields in its iron hand the awful terrors of life and death, over the heads and before the eyes of every one who has the moral daring to think for himself, and to assert the rights of conscience. I shall state a fact to illustrate this:—

“ I once had a parishioner whose name was D——, a Roman Catholic schoolmaster, who had been led by the reading of the Scriptures to see the errors of the Church of Rome. He had frequently attended privately upon me for spiritual instruction, and had avowed his intention of attending openly at the parish church. As soon as this intention became known, there was a notice posted by night on his house, stating that if he did not forthwith cease from reading the Scriptures, and immediately return to mass, he should be visited and shot; and the notice went on to state that he should be treated in precisely the same way as a man named M—— had been treated a short time before. That man, who was a Protestant, was shot dead in the cool of the evening, while sitting happily with his wife and children round his own fireside! This original notice, which was brought to me at the time, is still in my possession. I shall state another fact:—

“ I had a parishioner named M——, a Roman Catholic farmer, who expressed his intention, together with all his family, of withdrawing from the Church of Rome, and attending in future upon the services of the parish church. I had frequent conversations with him on the subject; but when his intention became known, attempts were made to intimidate him. One morning early, as he opened his door, the very first object that met his eye was his grave, already made to the size and shape of a coffin, at his own threshold! Awful as was this significant threat, he visited me that very day, and avowed his resolve to persevere. The result was that in a few nights afterwards his house was broken open by a large gang, who shattered to atoms every article of property in his house; beat his wife and children; and, after baptizing him again, as they called it, back into the Church of Rome, left him nearly dead from the horrid usage he received at their hands. One of the party was apprehended, and tried at the assizes before Judge Vandaleur, and transported. I shall state one instance more:—

“ I know of a man, named O’C——, a Roman Catholic schoolmaster, who was led by his reading the Scriptures to avow a change in his religious sentiments. He accordingly felt it his duty to attend, as a Protestant, at his parish church. The very first day he left his home to attend that church—on the Sabbath-day, when all evil passions might well be stilled in its holy hours of worship, at the full noon-tide hour, and in the full blaze of day—for it was just twelve o’clock—on the King’s highroad, leading to the parish church, he was waylaid, and deliberately and horribly murdered! Nor was this all of the horrid tragedy—for a crowd assembled shortly afterwards, and the parish priest attended, and having taken some Protestant books from his pockets, he held them up in the presence of the people, and declared that the murder was a just judgment from heaven upon the man for having such books in his possession! These particulars were proved on the inquest, and as the horrible affair occurred in a parish of which I was the curate, I can write, as I now write, from personal knowledge.

“ These facts, my Lord, have, with hundreds of others, come under my own personal observation. The unhappy victims were my own parishioners; I was intimately acquainted with all the particulars, and I now publicly offer to have them proved before any suitable tribunal in the kingdom. But it must not be supposed—as it is too generally believed—that the great body of the Roman Catholic peasantry are willing perpetrators of these

horrors which make us blush for our country, and make appalled humanity shrink shuddering away. They are impelled to them by an iron despotism, which they deem as odious as it is irresistible. I shall state a fact to illustrate this:—

"It is but a very short time since I was sent for to visit an aged woman on her death-bed: she had always been deemed a Roman Catholic, and I ever regarded her as such. I visited her of course, and I asked her how it was that she—being a Roman Catholic—should have desired to speak with me in dying? She told me that although she was generally believed to be a Roman Catholic, yet that she really was a Protestant: and that she had been such, secretly, for 16 years! Two adult females, members of her family, were the only persons present, and they stated that it had been long the same way with themselves; to the eye of the world they were Roman Catholics, but in their own house and private circle they had for many years been Protestants. I expressed my surprise that they, professing thus to have held so long the blessed truth of the Gospel, should have concealed it from me and from the world. Upon which the withered and dying woman raised herself in her bed with an effort, and with eyes in tears, and uplifted hands, declared that she had kept it secret because she feared that if it were known, her family would be murdered or otherwise injured! She died immediately afterwards, and her family have left the neighbourhood.

"No one can conceive, who has not had opportunity for personal knowledge, the fierce and horrid language which is too often uttered by the priests against every one who shows a tendency to abandon the church of Rome; and your lordship would be shocked to your inmost soul to hear the horrid and malignant curses which are often pronounced from the chapel altars in our country parishes against such persons. Nor, I grieve to say it, are they idle and powerless curses; for there are in every community knots or cabals of discontented and deluded persons, who are ever ready to fulfil them to the letter. I shall illustrate this by a fact:—

"I knew a man named H——, who was originally a Roman Catholic, who had braved with the spirit of a martyr the hostility of the priest by embracing Protestant principles. The priest, who is one of the clergy under the authority of Dr. M'Hale, who was a prophet of that school to which I have referred, and in one of his prophetic raptures denounced poor H—— by name from the chapel altar, and uttered a prophecy that, as a judgment from heaven for his apostasy, his property should be under a curse, and would pine away in afflictions and losses! A few short days had scarcely rolled away when the fulfilment of the prediction commenced: his cow sickened and died, and in a few days more his second cow likewise sickened and died, and left the poor sufferer upon the verge of poverty! The fact is, that the satellites of the priest, taking the hint from the prediction, poisoned the cows, and thereby fulfilled the prophecy—confirmed the influence of the priest—and deterred others from the example of abandoning the Church of Rome.

"Your lordship will at once perceive that this is a species of persecution infinitely more effective than the severest penal enactments against the extension of the religion of the Established Church, and that it is a despotism over the consciences of men which should not be tolerated in any land for an hour.

M. HOBART SEYMOUR,

"17, Sackville Street, London, Sept. 30, 1835.

Curate of Ballinrobe, Mayo."

From the above melancholy facts the reader may gather the inferences, that the persecuting spirit of Popery is the same that it ever was—that it only waits a favourable opportunity for making similar manifestations, whenever it acquires the power—and that, in order to the worst species of persecution, it is not necessary that the church should have any assistance from the secular arm, or hold any alliance with the state; yea, that unless taken in time, the persecuting power of the Church of Rome may prove too strong for the civil authorities of the land. What a contrast is Popery to true Christianity! How different the precepts, to love our neighbour as ourselves, to love our enemies, to do good to all men as we have opportunity—from the scenes wrought out under the direct influence of the Popish priesthood of Ireland! At the same time, what an evident dread on their part of the light of Scripture! What a secret and ill-disguised consciousness that the minds of many in their communion need to be repressed from inquiry by the most forcible means, and would otherwise abandon Popery! In such circumstances as these, will the people of this country—will men who know and appreciate what freedom is, allow a Popish party to intimidate British-born subjects from professing what they believe to be the truth of God, in the knowledge of the dread results with which it would be attended?

What Protestant of Scotland who values liberty, or humanity, or truth, or religion, whatever may be his political opinions, can honestly give the slightest countenance or support to Popery, and through it to a system of such horrid persecution? What true Protestant will not rather feel it to be his imperative duty to co-operate with other Protestants, in the use of all prudent and vigorous means for neutralizing the power of Popery, succouring the oppressed, and saving the cause of true religion from martyrdom? There is no time to lose—every hour of delay adds to the daring of the Church of Rome. The seed has for years been sowing, and the Roman Catholic priesthood are now prepared to reap the harvest.

Glasgow, 16th October, 1835.

